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2019

Spring 1-15-2019

ENG 4762-001: Advanced Poetry Writing

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Recommended Citation

Abella, Olga, "ENG 4762-001: Advanced Poetry Writing" (2019). *Spring 2019*. 65.
https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2019/65

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ENGLISH 4762

Dr. Olga Abella (oabella@eiu.edu)
3325 Coleman (6297)

Office Hours: TR 11-12:30, F 11-1
and by appointment

I. **TEXTS:**

The Norton Anthologies of Modern Poetry and Contemporary Poetry (**NOR V2**)
Outsiders: Poems About Rebels, Exiles, and Renegades (**OUT**)
Unsettling America: An Anthology of Contemporary Multicultural Poetry (**UA**)
Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café [**ALOUD**]
The Poetry Home Repair Manual [**PHRM**]

II. **ASSIGNMENTS** (with appropriate grade % for each):

1. **Portfolio:** A **manuscript** consisting of the various drafts, including the very first one and especially the final, finished draft, of **15 poems** you will have worked on during the semester, **and the comments received from class responses**. The different drafts will enable me to evaluate the progress you have made for each poem. Many of these we will discuss in a workshop format in class. **Due April 25.**
(40%)
2. **Journals.** This will be a log of your responses to the poems you will be reading throughout the semester from the course texts. At the top of each entry you must write the poem's title, writer's name, text name, and page#. For each poem, you will first write your initial thoughts/reactions/feelings and then reflect more fully on what inspired your response by looking at the poem more closely. What words are especially concrete or tangible? Do the line and stanza breaks enable the poem to express its point, images, etc, in a more powerful way? Does the poem sound or look a certain way which appeals to you? Why did you pick this poem? What do you think it is trying to say? In this journal, you are studying other writers' poems to understand better what makes poetry work well. And to recognize what kind of poetry appeals to you and why. By being a more careful **reader** of poetry, you will become a better **writer** of poetry, and will also be able to edit your poems with a more objective eye. You should write at least **one page** per poem. The **journal will be collected 3 times** during the semester, but the third time will be a specific assignment I will give you. The final grade for the journal will be given at the end.
(30%)
3. **Participation:** The main focus of this class is **your** poetry. We will spend most of the semester discussing and critiquing your poems in a workshop format. Therefore, your response to one another's poems is a crucial part of class. As each other's audience, you **must** provide **written and oral feedback** for the poems presented in class. At the end of each presentation, you will give the person whose poem we discussed your written comments with your name on them. Not providing comments will hurt your participation grade. Also, when you present, you will need to provide copies for the class of the poem you will workshop. (30%)

- III. **COURSE PURPOSE:** We will begin the class by examining poems written by published contemporary poets in order to learn how to discuss a poem and to develop a sense of what makes a poem good according to contemporary standards. For example, we will talk about voice and point of view, rhythm, images, stanzas, line breaks. Then we will turn our attention to poems written by you and examine them in the same way. The purpose of the class is to help you become a better writer of poems by reading the works of established poets and understanding what makes their poems successful or not, by giving you exercises that make you write specific poems to help you understand what to **avoid doing** in a poem (such as **rhyming, preaching, generalizing, using abstract language or clichés**) and what **makes a poem work** (such as **showing rather than telling**, specific experiences conveyed with concrete images). You will also learn how to submit your poems for publication.
- IV. **ATTENDANCE:** If you don't come to class, there basically is no class, since class is about your writing and your comments about your classmates' writing. **[Specifically, you are expected to present on the day you are scheduled. Your presentation is what the class is doing that day. Plus, your absence will deny someone else the opportunity to workshop a poem. Missing on the day you present is especially BAD.] Having more than 3 unexcused absences will result in a failing participation grade.**
- V. **LATE WORK:** All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lateness will result in a lower grade. If you cannot complete an assignment on time, you must see me **before** it is due.
- VI. **FINAL NOTE:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disabilities Services (6583) as soon as possible.

Course Calendar:

- Jan. 8 Introduction; Setting the schedule
 10 Journaling; Smith, "Skinhead," p. 277 [**ALoud**]; Domina, "Pharaoh's Army Got Drowned," p.73, Holmes, "Depressive Episode," p.121 [**OUT**]; Chapter One, pgs. 1-17 [**PHRM**]
 15 Raine, "A Martian Sends a Postcard Home," p.854, Duffy, "Medusa," p.1028 [**NOR, V.2**]
 Komunyakaa, "Facing It," p.861, Cole, "Childlessness," p.1039 [**NOR, V.2**]; Chapter Two, pgs. 19-23 [**PHRM**]
 17
 22 workshop: 4
 24 workshop: 4
 29 workshop: 2; Writing Exercise-----**Round 1**
 31 workshop: 4; Chapter Three, pgs. 25-34 [**PHRM**]
- Feb 5 workshop: 4
 7 workshop: 2; Chapter Four, pgs. 35-44 [**PHRM**]; Writing Exercise -----**Round 2**
 12 workshop: 4; **JOURNALS DUE (7 poems)**
 14 workshop: 4; Chapter Five, pgs. 45-54 [**PHRM**]
 19 workshop: 2; Writing Exercise-----**Round 3**
 21 workshop: 4; Chapter Six, pgs. 55-63 [**PHRM**]
 26 workshop: 4
 28 workshop: 2; Chapter Seven, pgs. 65-72 [**PHRM**]; Writing Exercise-----**Round 4**
- Mar 5 workshop: 4
 7 workshop: 4; Chapter Eight, pgs. 73-91 [**PHRM**]
 12 SPRING BREAK
 14 SPRING BREAK
 19 workshop: 2; **JOURNALS DUE (7 poems)**; Writing Exercise -----**Round 5**
 21 workshop: 4; Chapter Nine, pgs. 93-109 [**PHRM**]
 26 workshop: 4
 28 workshop: 2; Chapter Ten, pgs. 111-124 [**PHRM**]; Writing Exercise-----**Round 6**
- Apr 2 workshop: 4
 4 workshop: 4; Chapter Eleven, pgs. 123-145 [**PHRM**]
 9 workshop: 2; Writing Exercise-----**Round 7**
 11 workshop: 4
 16 workshop: 4
 18 workshop: 2; **JOURNALS DUE (New Assignment)**; How to Publish; Chapter Twelve, p. 147-58 [**PHRM**]-----**Round 8**
 23 workshop: 5
 25 workshop: 5; **PORTFOLIOS DUE**;-----**Round 9**
 (for people presenting this day, portfolios due 26th)